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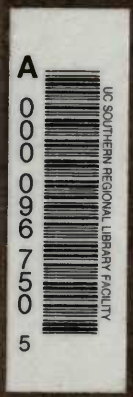

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OBSERVATIONS

ON

Mr. Whitbread's Poor Bill,

AND ON THE

POPULATION OF ENGLAND:

INTENDED AS

A SUPPLEMENT

TO

A SHORT INQUIRY

INTO THE

POLICY, HUMANITY, AND PAST EFFECTS

OF THE

POOR LAWS, &c.

By JOHN WEYLAND, Jun. Esq.

THE AUTHOR OF THAT WORK,

AND ONE OF HIS MAJESTY'S JUSTICES OF THE PEACE FOR THE COUNTIES OF OXFORD, BERKS, AND SURRY.

"Æquè et pauperibus prodest, locupletibus æquè."

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OBSERVATIONS,

&c.

§ 1. When men of ability, and political importance, so far forego the principles of personal ambition, as to dedicate their time, and talents to the gratuitous investigation of the means, by which the moral, and political condition of the lower orders of the people may be most ameliorated; a very imperative claim to public gratitude is established in their favour. In truth, since every man, however he may look to his condition in a future world, as the ultimate end, and reward of all his actions in this, cannot but feel a very lively interest in the success of his schemes for the present benefit of his fellow-creatures; it is but bare and strict justice, that those, who have forborne to reap the temporal harvest, to which their talents fairly give a claim, in order to apply them

to the disinterested purposes of philanthropy, should at least enjoy to its full extent the ideal, and to them most grateful tribute of praise, and admiration from their country. Such a tribute none who heard Mr. Whitbread's speech on the Poor Laws on the 19th February, and few, who have read the report of it with attention, can refuse to pay him in the most unqualified degree. Least of all should the author feel disposed to withhold his mite of praise from the general contribution, who, in the work alluded to in the title-page, published a short time before the outline of many of the most practicable improvements since found in the Bill, and detailed the principles of policy, upon which they are founded.

§ 2. That work however did certainly go much further in many instances than the Bill in question; and from the result of very mature deliberation, the latter seems to fall short of the possible degree of attainable good, as much as Mr. Whitbread's *professed object* appears to go beyond it. The author would be far from hazarding this opinion, if the approbation bestowed upon the "Short Inquiry" by men eminently calculated, from

their practical, and speculative knowledge, to form an impartial judgment, did not give him great reliance on the soundness of the principles therein laid down; how conscious soever he may be of the injury they suffer from his deficient execution of the work. Nor can he avoid finding his confidence increased by the consideration, that an anonymous publication meets with no success, but what is derived from an unbiassed judgment of its intrinsic merits; that it partakes neither of the advantage, nor injury, which a knowledge of its author might produce.

§ 3. Mr. Whitbread states his object to be, to render the Poor Laws obsolete, by improving the moral and political condition of the poor. The means he proposes for this purpose are various, and though presumed to be perfectly inadequate to the end in view, even to a practicable and desirable extent, may perhaps with some improvements, be rendered of infinite service in promoting the temporal, and eternal happiness of that most useful, and interesting class of the people. — But before we enter into any consideration of those means, it is important to consider, how far (supposing it possible) it be really ad-

visable to render the Poor Laws obsolete; by which must of course be intended their ultimate and entire cessation? And whether such an event would not produce a *great deterioration* in the moral and political condition of the poor, instead of *any amendment?*

§ 4. In the second and third chapters of the "Short Inquiry," arguments are used to prove (in contradiction to Mr. Malthus's application of his principles to this country,) that a redundant population, without reference to the conditional circumstances of the food raised from the soil, and the actual demand for labour, has always been necessary to our welfare and existence, since our first emergence from barbarism; and that that necessity is at present in a peculiar degree apparent. The proof of these facts has been established in those chapters with some degree of success, according to the unbiassed opinion of much abler judges than the author, which he has more than once had the satisfaction of hearing as an indifferent bystander. The whole of the "Short Inquiry" has indeed been allowed by those persons to be a fair and reasonable answer to such parts of Mr. Malthus's Essay on Population as

apply exclusively to England, or to countries in a similar state of society. In the climate, and present state of society in England, the Poor Laws * have been shewn to be the only means, by which a redundant population and national prosperity can be preserved, without countervailing injury to the general welfare. And it is apprehended that at this period of time, it would be quite superfluous to waste any arguments in proving, that every measure tending to impair the national industry, and prosperity, would, generally speaking, give a blow equally fatal to individual virtue and happiness.

§ 5. In sect. 35, ch. ii. it is stated, that "a nation in want of a great supply of people, must do one of two things: either it must give to every man, whether married or not, wages high enough to support a large family, that early marriages may be encouraged; or it must hold out the prospect of assistance to those, who actually have large families, to any necessary amount, of which the average rate of wages may fall short: for it cannot be supposed possible to

* See the whole of the second chapter of the "Short Inquiry."

pay a labourer wages, not in proportion to his labour, but to the size of his family." In the three following sections it was clearly shewn, that even could this third proposition be rendered feasible, and the assistance were given exclusively to the labourer with a large family *in wages*, that is, from the *employer of labour*, and not *from the public*, still the public interest would materially suffer.

§ 6. To adopt the first of the three propositions, would evidently not only ruin the national prosperity, but would directly open the door to the most abandoned vice, and profligacy; by enabling the young and thoughtless bachelor, whose income at present far exceeds his just wants, to riot in drunkenness for two or three additional days of the week, upon the earnings of the remainder. This must inevitably be the case, if either by the operation of the preventive check in diminishing population, or by the absurd measure of rating wages, the general price of labour should be raised so high, as that a labourer, whether with or without a family, should be able to earn a sum large enough to support several children, without extraneous assistance.

§ 7. The present average rate of wages in England, is about sufficient for a labourer to provide reasonably for himself, his wife, and two children; as appears from the 5th and 12th sections, chap. iv. of the Short Inquiry. The assertion may be fortified by further proof; and the following calculation is given, not as containing an accurate account of the articles of necessity which every poor family can actually procure, though in most cases they possess them; but of those, which, considering the general improvement of the country, should in strict justice be provided by some means or other, for that class of persons, who are the fundamental instruments of all prosperity, and improvement. The *identical calculation* is of course only meant to apply to parts of the country, where wheaten bread is generally consumed; but it is apprehended, that one of *a similar nature* would apply to other parts; since the price of wages will bear the same average proportion to that of the usual food of the poor: and good policy requires that that food should improve in quality, with the general improvement of the surrounding neighbourhood. The sum for *mere food*, is stated to be equal to an half-peck loaf for

each individual (one with another) per week; which allowance is found to agree pretty accurately with every calculation that has been made, of the most economical means, by which a poor family is accustomed to provide itself with food.

Calculation of the annual Income and Expenditure of a Peasant, his Wife and two Children, the Price of Bread being 1*s. the Quartern Loaf.*

Weekly Outgoings.	£.	s.	d.
Food, half a peck loaf each person, at 2*s.* - - - -	0	8	0
Candles, half a pound, on an average of winter and summer, at 10*d.* the *lb.* - - - -	0	0	5
Soap, half a pound, at 10*d.* the *lb.*	0	0	5
Tea, 1 oz. - - - -	0	0	4
Sugar, three quarters of a pound, at 8*d.* the *lb.* - - -	0	0	6
Butter, half a pound - -	0	0	5
Schooling for two children, half the expense, according to the system in the "Short Inquiry" -	0	0	3
	0	10	4

	£.	s.	d.
Which weekly sum, multiplied by 52, the number of weeks in the year, makes - - -	26	17	4

Yearly Outgoings.

Clothing for a man - -	1	10	0
Ditto for a woman - -	1	0	0
Ditto for two children, 10*s.* each	1	0	0
Medicine and other unavoidable expenses, 5*s. per* head - -	1	0	0
Rent - - - - -	2	0	0
Fuel - - - - -	0	15	0
Loss of time from accidents, bad weather, &c. - - -	1	0	0
Total expenses	35	2	4

The following is presumed to be a fair average of the earnings of a labourer and his wife in countries where wheaten bread is the usual food of the poor. Particular and sudden demands for labour may, in a few places, occasion a temporary rise in wages; but the increased demand for hands, and the concurring interests of the employer and the employed, will soon produce a supply sufficient to reduce wages to the average level of the rest of the country.

Earnings of the Family.	£.	s.	d.
Earnings of the man and his wife at 13*s.* a week - -	33	16	0
Additional earnings in harvest	2	0	0
Total earnings	35	16	0
Total expenses	35	2	4
Excess of earnings in a family consisting of a man, his wife, and two children - - -	0	13	8

Each additional child will bring an expense upon the family of *per annum*,

Food at 2*s.* a week - -	5	4	0
Clothing - - - -	0	10	0
Medicine, &c. - - -	0	5	0
Addition to the quantity of the other articles - - - -	1	0	0
Total annual addition for each child	6	19	0

But every additional child subtracts from the earnings of the family, by depriving it of part of those gained by the wife's labour: so that we may well suppose the annual ex-

cess of expenses above the earnings, in a family consisting of a man, his wife and three young children, to be above 8*l.* with four children 16*l.* and so on; which deficiencies, if the children are to be reared into useful, and healthy subjects must be supplied by the public. A common-sized cottage-garden will not justify any deduction from these expenses; but the few peasants who have larger gardens, an orchard, and above all a small field, may certainly supply themselves with much of what in the former cases must be provided by the public.

§ 8. Though Mr. Whitbread saw many labourers, who had reared large families without parochial assistance, appear as claimants for the prizes held out for such persons at the late Duke of Bedford's agricultural meetings; that circumstance does not appear to afford just grounds for concluding, against all calculation and probability, that the generality of the peasantry are equally capable, or could be made so by any encouragement, not interfering with the general prosperity, except parochial assistance. In almost every village a few labourers may be found in local circumstances more fortunate than the remain-

der; they may have a larger garden, an orchard or a field; kind friends, or indulgent and generous masters; by whose assistance, coupled with their own industry, they may have reared a large family without parochial relief. These persons, who never dreamed that they had been exercising any extraordinary virtue, in partaking of the enjoyment of such advantages, were called forth into notice by the premiums held out; which perhaps might have been more justly bestowed upon some less fortunate neighbours, who without such advantages had been equally industrious, but who received in lieu of them, assistance from the public for part of their family.

§ 9. Mr. Whitbread is reported to have said in his speech, that upon conversing with the claimants for these prizes, they could not inform him, neither did they probably know themselves, by what means they had been able to rear their children. Those who are conversant with the poor will not place the most implicit confidence in this alleged ignorance of theirs, as to their means of living. But it is natural to suppose, that finding themselves held up as the heroes of the day, and

praised for great superiority over their neighbours in every good and estimable quality, they should have been extremely unwilling to dissolve the charm, and reduce their exalted merit to nothing more, than the adventitious possession of some advantage, which Providence more than any superior industry had procured for them. It is a little too much however to argue from facts like these, that a peasant can *in general* rear a family of six children without parochial assistance*; in contradiction to a rigid and undeniable arithmetical calculation, proving that the money he receives will not nearly provide them with a bare supply of the most homely food.

§ 10. It appears then, that the only possible method by which any alteration in the condition of the poor can render the Poor Laws obsolete, must be from such a prevalence of the preventive check, (supposing it possible, against the experience of all ages and nations, to render it generally prevalent among the lowest orders of the people,) as would

* This is however assumed in the premiums held out by Mr. Whitbread's Bill.

continually diminish population; till the scarcity of labour should raise its price enough, to enable a labourer, on the ordidinary wages of the country, to rear a large family. By which operation, besides the introduction of a ruinous check to the public industry, and prosperity, by the increase in the price of every article, which would be induced by that in the price of labour; it is evident that the money now paid exclusively to the fathers of large families, in the form of poor rates, would be equally extended to those with small families, or with none, in the form of wages; which must double the amount of the sums now paid, without adding a tittle of advantage in an economical point of view. The moral effects would be still less promising; for as this additional sum must be paid to the comparatively uninstructed, at that early period of life, when even the best taught are seldom able to withstand the temptation to idleness, which the possession of superfluous money holds out; a large portion of the labour of the young, and active, of those best calculated, and most called upon to employ it in the service of the community, would be lost: and habits of irregularity, and profligacy must inevitably

be contracted, at an early period of life, producing a quantity of vice and misery, infinitely greater than any that exists even under the present defective dispensation of the Poor Laws.

§ 11. These would be the first consequences. But the smaller quantity of articles, which this diminished quantity of labour would enable the country to produce, and the consequent high price imposed upon all manufactures, and particularly upon the produce of land, would raise their price so much out of all proportion with those of other states, that a complete stop would soon be put to their production; and instead of a population employed at high wages, we should presently have a population for whom there would be no employment at all. It is needless to expatiate on the moral and political consequences of such a misfortune; or to shew that public and individual happiness would soon be completely at an end: that famine and misery would be the common lot of all the lower orders; and that the higher orders, after the appropriation of the wreck of their property to the relief of their fellow-subjects, would shortly be reduced to the same level. The natural con-

sequence of this progression of wretchedness would be first, the diminution, next the almost utter extinction of the people.

§ 12. It has been said by some however, that a young man should have the power, *if he be so inclined*, of saving a sum against his marriage or old age. The answer is, that he has it now! and the use generally made of that power, will enable us to form a pretty fair judgment of what would occur, should the temptation to improvidence be still further increased. The policy would indeed be less wise, than that of a parent, who should give a schoolboy his pocketful of money, that he may buy into the funds, and put it out at compound interest, as a provision for manhood or old age: the boy too knowing the whole time, that should he squander the money, his parent has a store in reserve, which he is bound to bestow upon him for his future exigencies.

§ 13. Among the young or the unincumbered, it would be a great blessing that the Poor Laws should be checked in their operation by positive enactment. And here it is impossible to avoid seeing that Mr.

Whitbread's Bill does not go far enough. The arguments in favour of this opinion are the same with those detailed in the 7th, 12th, and 13th sections, chap. iv. of the "Short Inquiry;" where the proper remedy is pointed out: nor was there one word in any part of Mr. Whitbread's speech, that at all invalidated any of the arguments there used; except an opinion, that vicious poverty is equally entitled to legal relief, with that arising from unavoidable misfortunes; the justice or humanity of which position, it would not perhaps be very easy to maintain. With respect to saving money, it is certain that no habits among the lower orders are so averse to it, as those of idleness, drunkenness, and irregularity of labour. Still less will it be denied that a peasant or manufacturer in the vigour of youth, and height of his passions, with a superfluity of money, and under no control, must necessarily contract vicious habits; which will not only put all idea of saving out of his mind, but must soon incapacitate him for all kinds of industry, by which he can hereafter support a family. This then being the case, surely every plan for bettering the condition of the poor must be defective, unless it contain provisions to control that degree

of this evil, which now exists, and to prevent its future progress, and increase.

§ 14. To return to the operation of the laws upon large families. If each couple rear only two children, and all marry, the population remains stationary. — Consider then how many of our people necessarily continue single, that a peasant's wages enable him to rear only two children; and a tolerable estimate may be formed, both of the number of children, whom the public interest requires the married peasant to rear, and how necessary an extraneous fund must be to assist him in that purpose.

§ 15. It appears then, that in England, and let us add, in every highly civilized country subject to rigorous seasons, whose interest requires a great proportion of its peasantry to rear large families, such an institution as the Poor Laws is the only one, by which the object can be attained, without a greater countervailing evil; because by them alone the necessary assistance can be given to those who want it, without the evil participation of those who want it not; and whose temporal and eternal ruin it would inevitably cause. Yet Mr. Whitbread's professed object

is, to render the Poor Laws obsolete; that is, to put an end to them; and he fortifies his intentions by a reference to Scotland, where he asserts, that the general prevalence of the blessing of a good education has already rendered them so. The author begs to be considered as speaking with much diffidence as to the actual state of the Poor Laws in Scotland; since he never met with two persons, or two books giving the same account of it; a difference arising perhaps from the various operation of the laws in different parts of that country. But from mature consideration of the best intelligence to be got upon the subject, he cannot but think, (with all due deference to the high authority of Mr. Whitbread,) that the Poor Laws in Scotland, far from being obsolete, are but just beginning to be called into action *: that in the more sequestered villages, whose situation has not been much altered of late years, the poor are supported by voluntary contributions, as with us before the statute of Elizabeth, when we were in nearly the same state of advancement: but that in the manufacturing and more improved parts, the

* Does not the information in the Appendix to Mr. Whitbread's Speech seem to justify this opinion?

same principle is adopted as with us at present: with this difference however in *the execution*, that the Scotch, seeing the sad effects of the neglect of strict attention among us, have looked closer into the distribution and application of the sums raised. Therefore their rates are lower; and from the more simple manners of the people, but just emerging into a state of riches and prosperity, and in some measure too, certainly from superior education, the sums are probably spent, chiefly in the legitimate object of supporting large families, and orphan children.

§ 16. But if other checks to prevent the idleness of the young, (who notwithstanding a good education must, with the increase of luxury *, gradually relax in their industry, from a prospect of future support from the public,) are not introduced, before Scotland has made the larger strides it promises, towards the general diffusion of riches and luxury; there is every reason to expect that its situation with respect to poor, and Poor Laws, will become similar to what ours is now. It behoves Scotland therefore to take

* For the acceptation of the word luxury as applied to a nation see "Short Inquiry," Note at bottom of page 180.

warning by us, still more than she has hitherto: and by incorporating with her Poor Laws the provision recommended in the 13th sect. 4th chap. of the "Short Inquiry," to obviate before its occurrence, the evil that provision is intended to counteract; and thus save herself the painful necessity of correcting it with some harshness, after it has risen to a difficult and dangerous height; which some time or other must certainly be our task.

§ 17. The observations in the foregoing Sections are by no means written in general opposition to Mr. Whitbread's Bill, but only to its professed object. With respect to the Bill itself, its well-wishers will be glad to find upon examination, that it is totally inadequate to its proposed object of rendering the Poor Laws obsolete; inasmuch as it does not point out any method, by which a peasant may be enabled to rear a large family without assistance, or with such a family save a provision for old age. Neither does it lead to any results, that will prevent the peasantry from becoming the fathers of such families. For which reasons, and because many of its provisions are calculated to better the condi-

tion of the poor, the Bill will fortunately perhaps have many supporters, who would otherwise have resisted it. The object of the foregoing observations is to shew, that if any persons should attempt to make such alterations as would *really* render the Poor Laws obsolete, in their operation upon large families, they would do a serious injury to their country in general, and to the poor in particular: while those who would improve its provisions, so as to destroy the operation of the laws, in encouraging idleness among young men with small or no families, would confer an equal benefit on the public, and the individuals.

§ 18. One more observation occurs, before we proceed to a summary investigation of each head of Mr. Whitbread's Bill. The prospect of the happiness, which it is supposed a general rise in wages would confer upon the heads of large families, by giving them *independent means* of rearing their children, may so blind the eyes of some to the political inconveniences, and the countervailing vice and misery, it would immediately introduce among the young and unmarried, and therefore ultimately into the whole society; that they might be willing to run the risk.

Let us, therefore, analyze this supposed accession of happiness; and see whether it correspond in extent with the notions often entertained of it. A generous mind is very apt, in arguing the case of another, to place itself in a idea in the same situation, that it may judge the better of the feelings and wishes of the object of its attention; and followed up to its full extent, it is not only a reasonable, but an amiable, and a christian practice. But we are sometimes apt to forget, that in order to do this effectually, it is not sufficient to fancy ourselves (with the feelings and ideas peculiar to our own habits and situations) in the place of one with a completely opposite set of ideas; this would clearly lead us into the grossest errors: we might as reasonably attempt to judge of the pleasure a hound feels, in following a hare over a field, by endeavouring to trace the same scent with our nostrils. To estimate the real situation and feelings of another, we must divest our minds, if possible, of every idea they have imbibed; and undertake the still more difficult task of infusing into them the ideas of the person, of whose situation we pretend to judge. For happiness or misery in this world seems to depend chiefly, upon the relative proportion

of what is usually called good or evil, which befalls us, compared with what we have been in the habit of partaking. A poor chimney-sweeper will eat, drink, and be merry, will feel the excess of joy and happiness, in situations where a man of delicacy and refinement would die of horror, vexation, and disgust.

§ 19. So is the happiness of those peasants, who from the pressure of large families are in part supported by parochial relief, greater than we can suppose, who had rather die than have recourse to it. They are not ill-treated, nor even looked upon with an evil eye, when their situation is known to arise from the size of their families, and not from idleness; from the *insufficiency* and not the *voluntary neglect* of their labour: their necessity for assistance is known to be inevitable, and therefore not blameable; and not being degraded in their own estimation, nor in the eyes of their neighbours and associates, they cannot be considered as sufferers, since neither their minds nor bodies receive the slightest injury; or if a few exceptions exist to this assertion, some very trifling improvements in the laws would soon annihi-

late all grating sensations. It must never be forgotten too, that their situation is their own choice; that they preferred the comforts of a married life, with the chances attending it, to the prospect of remaining single, till they had saved enough to marry with prudence: and that they are the only rank in society, who enjoy that option upon such easy terms. Too scrupulous a delicacy is neither to be expected, nor encouraged among the lower orders of the people in any country. In ours, it would be much more useful, to explain to them the fact of their comparative superiority in substantial happiness over the poor of any other country, or of any former time in their own; than to infuse into their imaginations fanciful notions of *independence*, which neither the frame of their minds, nor their fixed and necessary habits can enable them to appreciate or enjoy.

> "Give me, I cried, enough for me,
> My bread and independency!"

was a reasonable cry enough from a needy and enlightened poet; but for the unenlightened peasant, the first of those blessings, in tolerable plenty, is alone more sweet, and more sufficient to his happiness, than a lively sensibility to the latter could possibly make

it. It is difficult to conceive, how a more fatal blow can be given to the real comfort of those, who, from the nature of things, and constitution of human affairs, must give up a great portion of their free agency to the control of others, than to instil into their minds morbid and fanciful notions of the blessings of independence, that is, of freedom from all restraint.

§ 20. It was matter of heartfelt satisfaction, to hear Mr. Whitbread, (who, from the goodness of his heart, is not apt to see the situation of the poor in the most favourable point of view,) admit that they did at no time enjoy in this country so great a share of comfort and happiness as at present. This admission is now of peculiar value, as it is too much the custom for those, who substitute violence and declamation for argument and fact, to indulge in injurious comparisons on this subject, without the shadow of proof, or the slightest ground of reason. Nevertheless, both the minds of the higher orders of the people, and the spirit of the English constitution, highly commend the principle of making every further practicable addition to the welfare, and happiness of the poor,

Wherefore, many liberal and enlightened provisions of Mr. Whitbread's Bill, which are evidently calculated to increase that happiness, cannot but receive the support of all friends to their country, and to mankind. The particular modifications which may be thought necessary, shall now be brought under discussion, in the order in which the provisions stand in the published Report of the Bill.

§ 21. And first, education. It is apprehended that two opinions do not exist in the country, as to the expediency of giving to the general mass of the poor, an opportunity of acquiring such a portion of education, as may tend to secure to them the means of contentment and happiness in this world, and of eternal salvation in the next. Enough has been said on the general expediency of such a measure in the "Short Inquiry." Instruction in reading, and a certain degree of the practice of it, upon the fundamental books of religion and morality, seem to be the proper and adequate means of conveying to the poor just notions of their duty towards God, and the peculiar duties of their station towards their neighbour. But a reasonable doubt

may be entertained how far an universal knowledge of writing and arithmetic *, among those who must subsist by the coarsest manual labour, is calculated to render them more contented and happy in that lot, and consequently better members of society. If it cannot be shewn to have these effects, much extension of such knowledge cannot be recommended, under any pretext of increasing the quantum of morality and virtue among the lowest orders of the people. For this reason the introduction of Dr. Bell's † and Mr. Lancaster's plan of education, so strongly enforced by Mr. Whitbread, may not perhaps be desirable to its full extent. Besides, as it is of the very essence of that mode of education, that a great number of children should be collected together in the same school, it must, from the nature of things, be confined to great towns, and the larger manufacturing villages. To bring together into one room three or four hundred children, would in many parts of the country, induce a necessity that some of them should every day walk nine or ten miles; and none

* See Article 8, for Parochial Schools, in Mr. Whitbread's Bill.

† See pages 34 and 98 of Mr. Whitbread's Speech, published by Ridgway.

who know any thing of the nature or disposition of the poor, can think it probable, (even supposing it possible,) that children so situated would attend with any regularity.

§ 22. The articles in the Bill for the direction of the parochial schools, seem formed upon a plan much too extensive, and costly for country parishes; and many of them upon principles fundamentally wrong; inasmuch as they are calculated (at a very heavy expense) to take away from the masters and mistresses all vigilance and activity, in the discharge of their duty; and from the parents of the children one principal inducement to their regular attendance, viz. the payment by the parent of a small part of the schooling: nor do they provide for these defects by the establishment of any regular superintendance over the schools, by the higher orders of the community, either ecclesiastical or civil. That these evil consequences must necessarily attend any appointment of schoolmasters *at stated salaries*, to schools where children are *to be instructed gratis* *, is presumed to be fully proved by argument, and analogy in the 34th and three following sections of the 4th

* See Articles 6 and 11, for Parochial Schools.

chapter of the Short Inquiry; where the different natures of the foundations of schools are discussed; unless the author has been more mistaken in them, than he has yet seen reason to believe.

§ 23. The allowing ministers, churchwardens, overseers, and vestries, with the consent of justices, and in default of the former, commanding the justices, to order the purchase of land, and the erection of *suitable buildings* for school-rooms, &c. to any amount, not exceeding one shilling in the pound each year *, upon the *true annual* value of all rateable property in the parish, (besides the salaries to the masters and mistresses,) would open a door to peculation, and jobbing to an extent, the want of due attention to which can be the only reason, to account for the introduction of such articles into the Bill. In the first place, such erections would be quite unnecessary in the country villages, where the common room of a good cottage, (which might be hired by the schoolmaster, properly paid by the head, according to the number of his scholars,) is quite large enough to hold the number of

* See Articles 1 to 5 for Parochial Schools.

children, whose distance of habitation can enable them to attend regularly. It should never be forgotten that education cannot be generally spread unless it be brought home *to the doors* of the poor: the *number* of the school-rooms is therefore of much greater *importance* than their size; and this is a most cogent secondary reason, against any general and indiscriminate power of erecting new buildings, to be inhabited by salaried masters and mistresses.

§ 24. In the next place, is the framer of the Bill at all aware of the sum to which one shilling in the pound annually, upon the *true annual value* of rateable property, would amount? In the 18th sect. of the 8th chap. of the "Short Inquiry," good authority is given for stating the sum at present levied under the Poor Laws, viz. 4,000,000*l.* to be equal to a rate of two shillings in the pound upon the *true annual* value of the property *at present rated:* supposing therefore the proposed taxation of personal property to the poor's rate not to take place; this provision of the Bill authorizes, or rather enforces a levy equal to the amount of half the present sum collected for the relief of the poor, or two millions of

money per annum; besides the salaries of the masters and mistresses, and of course the purchase of books, &c. which cannot amount to less than 500,000*l.* more; if a sufficient number for the purpose are appointed. So that estimating the proposed rate upon personal property, to produce only half the sum raised, an addition of 3,500,000*l.** a year, would be brought upon the rates till the plan was completed; and afterwards a permanent annuity of about half the sum for salaries, and re-

* In a following part of the Bill (which will be noticed presently) authority is given to raise another shilling in the pound for building cottages, &c.; so that taking the rate upon personal property (supposing it to be established) at the low estimate † of one half of that upon real property, the nation will within six months after the passing of this Bill, be saddled with an additional sum raised by rates to the amount of 6,500,000*l.* per annum, viz.

	£
A shilling rate for building schools on property now rated	2,000,000
A shilling rate on personal property proposed to be rated for the above purpose, estimated at one half of the property now rated	1,000,000
For salaries, &c.	500,000
A shilling rate on property now rated for building cottages, &c	2,000,000
Ditto on personal property proposed to be rated	1,000,000
Total	£6,500,000

† Vide sections 19 and 20, chap. viii. of the "Short Inquiry."

pairs; and this, in search of an advantage, which would not be found to accrue, if the arguments before alluded to against the efficiency of a system of salaried preceptors, and gratuitous instruction, have any foundation in reason. But such a system would considerably diminish the quantity of general instruction in the country, because the establishment of any system of public instruction for the poor, would immediately put an end to many of the exertions, now made by individuals for that purpose. If the public system be a good one, this effect would not be to be regretted; because private benevolence would be diverted into some other channel now unoccupied by it. But if the public system should prove inefficient, it is evident that much mischief would ensue, from the loss of that portion of instruction already obtained by the poor, through private bounty, or their own exertions.

§ 25. If then the enormous expense of the plan of education detailed in the Bill be very certain; and the benefits likely to flow from it equally problematical; it will not, it is hoped, be deemed presumptuous to request the attention of the legislature, and the public to

the outline of the plan contained in sect. 40 and 41, chap. iv. of the "Short Inquiry;" which is at least free from the same objections, is much more simple, cheap, and less liable to abuse; and might, it is presumed, be very easily rendered fully adequate to the attainment of the object in view in country villages. Of the metropolis and larger towns, the author does not pretend to judge, further than to express his thorough conviction, that a completely different system, with respect to *the entire management of the poor*, should exist between them, and the country villages.

§ 26. The next provision in the Bill is intended to secure a proper and safe place of deposit for the small earnings of the poor; upon which much has been said in the 4th chapter of the "Short Inquiry," with a great coincidence of opinion with Mr. Whitbread. The poor's fund, and the poor's assurance office, proposed in the Bill, seem to deserve unqualified approbation as to their principle; and the pains taken, and skill displayed by Mr. Whitbread and his friends, in the construction and arrangement of the *articles* concerning them, claim much attention and gratitude from the public. The numerous

statesmen and arithmeticians versed in financial operations, now existing in the country, should lend their assistance in constructing tables, or in any other way that may tend to make the money deposited as productive as possible. But it may perhaps be worthy of consideration, whether the correspondence by post, and the numerous certificates, and signed papers rendered necessary, by making London the sole depository; and the board established there, the direct organ of communication with the person making the deposit; may not form a plan rather too complicated for the immediate management of the poor? whether an authorized, and accountable agent, always at hand to transact such parts of the business, as they are incapable of, might not be the means of spreading the good effects of the institutions more widely? and whether from the necessary reliance the poor must place on others, for the conduct of all their business with the boards, they would not still be as liable to fraud as heretofore? To facilitate therefore their means of direct communication with the boards in London, and to make the plan come more home to their feelings, and understandings, it would perhaps be advisable

(as recommended in the "Short Inquiry," 10th sect. 4th chap.) to establish subordinate offices in each county, emanating from, and corresponding with the general boards; to which the poor may immediately resort; and where parliamentary faith and security would be pledged to them, for the due application of every penny lodged there *by their own hands.* A journey to the county town once a year to deposit savings and withdraw interest, would surely be more satisfactory to the poor, and attended with less difficulty, than the management of a correspondence, of which they could not understand one word. A scrap of paper filled with figures, can never give them the same satisfaction, or induce so general an adoption of the system, as an office, to which they might themselves resort, and where a person would attend, to explain the principles and prospects, under which the money was deposited.

§ 27. Nothing has hitherto been observed with respect to the expense of these establishments. To benefit the poor, none would repine at a much larger sum, *fairly drawn from the general stock.* But those who have considered the 29th and following sect. 5th

chap. of the "Short Inquiry," may perhaps join with the author in thinking, that the same expense may be the means of procuring (besides the benefits proposed in the Bill) the still greater and unquestionable advantages, detailed in those sections: advantages, in comparison of which all others are of small importance, because by them alone a rational ground can be laid for a future progress in improvement.

§ 28. The next provision of the Bill goes to altering the laws of settlement, to the extent of giving one to every man, in the parish where he may have resided five years, without receiving relief. If there be any truth in the arguments to be found in the 19th, 20th, and 21st sections, 5th chap. of the "Short Inquiry," this permission to a man, whether married or not, whether with a large family or not, to settle himself where he can by any means pick up a subsistence for five years, cannot but ultimately charge those places, which are there shewn to be the favourite residences of the poor, but where the public interest least requires their presence, with a very unfair and unequal proportion of the burden. Nor does it ap-

pear, that any one countervailing advantage would accrue to the poor. to compensate this evil: on the contrary, it is shewn in the above sections that it can only lead to an increase of profligacy, and vice among them. The liberty now enjoyed by the poor, of carrying their labour to any market they please, is fully sufficient for every beneficial purpose; nor can it be so universally admitted as Mr. Whitbread supposes *, "that the code of laws, *which exist* on this subject, is grievously oppressive to the poor, and injurious to the commonwealth." The 17th and six following sections, chap. 5th of the "Short Inquiry" are apprehended to be conclusive on this point; and to prove, that both the general interest of the community, and that of the individual labourer, alike demand the continuance of the laws of settlement, as they stand amended at present.

§ 29. Very serious inconvenience and injustice would likewise arise from making *mere residence*, unconnected with birth or service, the ground of settlement. The following is one of a numerous set of cases which might be cited: Suppose the proprietor of a whole

* See p. 46 of Mr. Whitbread's Speech by Ridgway.

parish (of which there are very many in this country) should wish to exonerate his property from all charge of poor's rate; let him purchase four or five acres of an adjoining parish, and gradually transfer his cottages to that spot; and the object is attained: the adjoining parish, after the expiration of five years, is bound to support the families of labourers, who have never done a stroke of work in it, as well as the labourers themselves in sickness and old age; while the parish which has received all the benefit of their labour, and who on every principle of justice, and sound policy, should in return support them, when their time for labour is past, or interrupted by accidents, would be exonerated from all charge. A long list of contingencies equally unjust in their operation, might be made, but let that above cited suffice. It speaks for itself more strongly, than any further observation can make it.

§ 30. The other proposition of giving parish officers power to inquire into the settlements of all strangers, likely to become chargeable, seems to be an excellent improvement, and entitled to unqualified approbation. It will be the means of saving an infinite deal of

time, trouble, and money to the parish officers, who at present can only begin to *inquire* after the family is actually chargeable; which often arises from the absence or death of the father, or husband; when the only satisfactory evidence is removed out of reach, or to be had only with great expense and difficulty. Deficient evidence must therefore be resorted to, and the foundation laid of many of those lawsuits, [redacted] where, as hath been well observed, immense sums are spent in arranging hosts of talents, and eloquence against each other, as if the existence of the state hung upon the paltry decision they are employed to influence.

§ 31. The provisions in the Bill with respect to the mode of voting in vestries, and which confer a greater influence upon property in those assemblies, seem consonant with good policy and the principles of the English constitution; since they give that due ascendancy to property over numbers, which is at once the security, and the consequence of every well-ordered government. Any measure, which tends to bring persons of property and enlightened minds to the vestry-room, must be attended, in every view of it, with bene-

ficial effects: though differences of opinion may therefore possibly arise, as to the detail of the powers given by the Bill, the principle seems indisputably good.

§ 32. The next provision is declaratory of the existing law, that personal as well as real property shall be rated; an object which has been shewn by the author to be of vital importance to the success, and due operation of the Poor Laws, and to the future prosperity of the state. All attempts at producing an equal distribution of the burden of the rates have hitherto failed; and how a mere declaratory enactment that all visible property, personal or real, shall be charged equally by an *ad valorem* rate, can perform what the existing laws, ordaining the same thing, have hitherto completely failed in, does not so clearly appear. It will probably operate principally in reviving the numerous law-suits which have already taken place on the subject *. But it does clearly appear from the 39th and other sections, chap. viii. of the "Short Inquiry," that, supposing such an object could be attained, it would be far

* See 34th and 35th sections, chap. viii. of "Short Inquiry."

from producing a fair and equal distribution of the burden; it would however be a great improvement. The author is thoroughly convinced, and the more he reflects, the deeper that conviction becomes, that the only effectual way of meeting the various and alarming evils, arising from the unequal pressure of the poor's rates, is the simple, fair, decisive and manly expedient, of taxing every species of profits equally, for the support of that system, by which all are equally benefited. And it is no small recommendation of this plan, that the sums left at the disposal of Parliament from the small rate proposed upon funded property, &c. * would enable them to relieve particular parishes overburdened with a poor population, in the best and most complete manner, by introducing industry and employment among them.

§ 33. The unequal pressure of the rate, complained of, is either worth an exertion to cure, or it is not. The arguments used in the "Short Inquiry," against the application of Mr. Malthus's principles of population to England, and his consequent policy with respect to the Poor Laws, are sound, or

* See 37th section, chap. viii. of "Short Inquiry."

they are not. If the affirmative of these two propositions be established, the only method of meeting the evil, without relinquishing every advantage growing out of the system, seems to be an equal rate upon all taxable profits generally. The difficulties in the way of it have lately been much smoothed; and if those still remaining are not overcome, for the sake of securing permanent prosperity to the country, and consequent happiness to individuals; our selfish and partial politics will deservedly lead us into difficulties, most probably to ruin. The author humbly conceives the arguments, in the eighth chapter of the "Short Inquiry," to be decisive upon this part of the subject; to enlarge more upon them, would draw this treatise to too great a length: they are therefore left to the mature deliberation of the public.

§ 34. The system there recommended would go far to preclude any necessity for the next provision in the Bill; which requires a return to the quarter sessions of the true value of all rateable property, personal and real in each parish of the county; and if it be proved, that any parish, *using due economy* pays more than double the usual average rate in the pound throughout the rest of the

county, such parish shall receive relief from the county rate, to the extent of reducing its rate to double the usual average. In the observations about to be made on this provision, the author begs to be considered as referring only to the country; and to put the parish of Spitalfields, adduced by Mr. Whitbread *, and all so situated, completely out of the question; because he is persuaded, that if due attention be given to the subject, it will be found, that the poor of the metropolis and suburbs, and perhaps of a very few of the largest towns, should be placed under laws, totally distinct from those applied to the thinner population of the country. With this proviso, the following difficulties seem to occur in the execution of this last-mentioned measure of the Bill. The average rate of every parish is made upon a rental in all cases different from the rack rental; but not differing in equal proportions: in some for example, the rate is levied upon half the rack rental; in others upon two thirds; and in a few upon one nearly amounting to a fair rack rental. Before therefore this provision can be executed

* See Speech by Ridgway, p. 64 and 65.

with any degree of justice, the rates must universally be made upon the fair average rack rental; a measure proposed indeed in the Bill, but which could not now be brought about, without an infinity of wrangling and litigation; and which certainly would not be facilitated, by the great additional interest given to every parish by the above provision, to conceal or depreciate the value of the property, upon which its rate is made. The proof of *due economy* having been used, would likewise give rise to much litigation, for the purpose of disputing and establishing the fact, between the parties to be burdened, and those to be relieved. For these reasons, and others detailed in the foregoing sections, it is presumed that a general assessment of all profits, leaving the sums raised from extra-parochial profits at the disposal of Parliament, for the benefit of the poor, would be the readiest and fairest method of equalizing both the burden, and advantage throughout the whole community.

§ 35. With respect to the county rate, as distinct from the foregoing provision, the author has nothing to add to what may be

found in the 32d section, chap. vi. of the "Short Inquiry."

§ 36. The next provision in the Bill empowers magistrates to adjudge rewards to a labourer once in his life, who shall have brought up *six or more* children without parochial assistance. With respect to the number of children here held out, as the criterion of virtuous industry in the labourer, the reader is referred to the 7th, 8th, and 9th sections of this Supplement; a due consideration of which may perhaps lead to the conclusion, that only one objection exists to its operation upon the mass of the peasantry, namely their utter inability in general to execute its conditions. So that its effects would either be, to give rewards for the fortuitous advantages pointed out in the 8th section; or of the same nature with the policy of that sovereign, who to improve the stature of his subjects, offered a reward of a hundred pieces of gold, for any men of eight feet high, who would enlist into his army. Nevertheless a system of rewards properly calculated, and made attainable upon conditions generally practicable, would certainly have a good effect; provided the ex-

pense could be kept within bounds. Such a system may be found in the 22d section, chap. iv. of the "Short Inquiry." But if pecuniary rewards should upon consideration be thought preferable, they should at least be granted to those, who have brought up and instructed three or more children without relief; to avoid exorbitant expense, they should be limited to a certain number *per annum;* and the justices, in selecting the objects from among the claimants, should be bound to prefer those, who had received the least quantity of fortuitous assistance; or were in possession of the fewest natural advantages; since they must evidently be the most industrious. The author cannot dismiss this subject without an unfeigned expression of respect for the general spirit, which pervades Mr. Whitbread's Bill; whose humane principle it is, to entice the poor to good conduct by making it their interest, rather than to force them by harshness and punishment *.

* Exceptions however must be made to the general application of this principle in some of the most populous and vicious parishes in the metropolis, and large towns; St. Giles's for example; which swarms with rogues and vagabonds of the worst description: in such places a degree

§ 37. Of the same complexion is the next regulation, that of honorary badges to distinguish merit: too sanguine hopes should not however be entertained of much good effect from such measures as these, on the character of the poor, even at their first institution. Personal marks of honour are the appropriate rewards of more exalted and enlightened minds, and seem to be of too unsubstantial a nature *, to influence in a great degree the actions of the poor and illiterate. To have any good effect at all too, many difficult conditions must be fulfilled. They must be awarded with perfect impartiality, to those who not only appear to the magistrates, *after patient investigation*, to be most deserving, but to those who are so in the estimation of their neighbours. How difficult, not to say impossible, this may be in general, is a question to be considered; and if it be not fulfilled, if the least trace, or even suspicion should ever occur, that such rewards are bestowed through favour or partiality, they cannot but have a bad effect, in proportion

of terror is the only expedient, by which order and economy can be at all preserved.

* See sect. 27, chap. vi. of "Short Inquiry."

as the distinction is at first regarded; because it would bring it into disrepute, and lay the foundation of envy, and other bad passions. For these reasons, and considering the unavoidable expense of this and the preceding provision, perhaps the system of encouragement pointed out in the "Short Inquiry" may be thought preferable.

§ 38. With respect to punishment, for idleness by badges of infamy, (the mere revival of an obsolete law, which has remained unexecuted on the statute-book for a long course of years;) there seems no ground for concluding, that such provisions can be enforced hereafter more strictly than heretofore. The poor will tear them off with indignation, and where is the magistrate who will severely punish them for doing so? The only means to prevent the increase of idleness, from a prospect of future relief from the public, are to cut off from such relief all, who have been in situations to make suitable provisions for themselves; (giving them at the same time a fair opportunity of laying up their savings in security and with profit.) The arguments for this system are

to be found in the 12th and 13th sections, chap. iv. of the "Short Inquiry."

§ 39. The exemption from the payment of poor's rates of every man not of sufficient ability, provided he does not inhabit a tenement exceeding the annual value of 5*l.*; and the enacting that he shall not, by reason thereof, be deemed to have received alms, or relief; is an excellent and praiseworthy provision; and must give sincere and heartfelt pleasure to those, whose observation has led them to remark the cruel pressure of the times, upon that decent and valuable class of persons, living upon limited income, and raised one step above the common labourer; who are perhaps in the present state of things, the truest objects of compassion in the kingdom, because more exposed than any others to the most poignant feelings of distress.

§ 40. The same praise must be bestowed on the following provision, which authorizes the granting of relief to poor persons, without submitting them to the necessity of entering into workhouses. The consideration bestowed upon this subject in the 43d and

three following sections, chap. iv. of the "Short Inquiry," precludes the necessity of saying more upon it here, than just to state, that the author cordially agrees in most of Mr. Whitbread's opinions on the subject of poor-houses: particularly excepting that, which states them * to be necessary receptacles for *orphan children*, the aged and infirm; to which he begs to oppose the reasoning in the 44th and 46th sections of the "Short Inquiry." And here, though a little out of the order in which the provisions stand in the Bill, the author wishes to express his approbation of the powers granted in the Bill, for forming and enforcing rules and regulations for the management and discipline of workhouses; an improvement much wanted, and which must be attended with the best effects, in such of those houses as may be permitted to remain.

§ 41. The next provision in the Bill gives power to each parish, to erect at the public expense a number of cottages, for the occupation of the poor, to any amount, which an annual rate of one shilling in the pound,

* See Speech published by Ridgway, p. 85.

upon the *true annual value* of the real, and personal property in each parish, will allow; that is, as hath been before shewn, to raise upon the country an additional annual rate of at least three millions for these purposes, provided they are generally executed: and that they will be so, the carpenters, bricklayers, painters, glaziers, stonemasons, and other tradesmen, who, with their friends and relations, are usually the leading characters in the vestries, will certainly take sufficient care. But putting all consideration of expense out of the question upon this occasion, the whole provision appears to be so utterly inconsistent with every principle of good policy, and well understood humanity; that it is humbly conceived, a slight investigation must presently shew it to be quite unworthy of being entertained.

§ 42. It seems certain, that wherever a man's labour is wanted, there a habitation will be provided, by *the individual in want of a labourer*, for his reception*: or by others, to whom an acknowledged want of habitations would evidently secure a good rent for any they might build. It is for the public advantage that the population

* See sect. 62, chap. ii. of "Short Inquiry."

and dwellings should be so distributed; and though it be possible, for improvement to proceed so much faster than population, in some particular spots, that the number of resident labourers may be insufficient for the demand, (as is said to have been the case in some parts of Lincolnshire,) yet the employers of labour, however absurdly prejudiced against the erection of cottages, will soon find their mistake in the manner most convincing to them; viz. by a great rise in wages; and will therefore have recourse to the evident remedy of inviting a population, by affording them habitations; thus creating a new set of industrious heads of families. The cottages scattered over the new enclosures, and in all the manufacturing villages, prove the justice of this reasoning. Men may always be safely left to follow their own interests; and where they coincide completely with those of the public, (which in a free country is usually the case,) the welfare of the state cannot have a more sufficient security. But the indiscriminate permission held out by the Bill, of erecting cottages *at the public expense*, wherever inhabitants may be found, though no demand for their labour exists, is a very different question; and friendly as the author

is, to the increase of population among industrious, and well-employed heads of families, he must be allowed to doubt whether heads of families should be created and established, where no demand for their labour exists; and the population must consequently be raised at more than double the expense to the public. For to what does the provision tend but to the providing habitations, at an enormous expense to the public, for persons who must themselves be supported in idleness; instead of obliging them, by that necessity which the want of a dwelling must create, to migrate to those places where their labour is in demand; and where dwellings will be erected for their reception at the expense of individuals, without any charge at all upon the public? Thus far on the policy of the measure: with respect to humanity; that virtue does not seem more interested in its adoption, unless it can be proved that a peasantry without employment will be more industrious, moral, and happy, than with a full demand and employment for its labour. Those, who are not satisfied with these arguments, are respectfully referred to others of the same tendency, in the 61st and two following sections, chap. ii. of the "Short Inquiry."

§ 43. We have now gone through all the provisions of the Bill, except the most important and difficult question concerning the best mode of administering relief; in which is included the employment of the poor. On this subject the author is happy to concur fully with Mr. Whitbread in his reprobation of the workhouse system, and in the provision so long wanted of rules and regulations for the internal management of those places. But it is surely a little extraordinary, that Mr. Whitbread, after stating himself to be an enemy to the workhouse system *, should afterwards propose, to enable the overseers to continue the present poor-houses, *to build others*, and to raise money for that purpose on the credit of the rates †. It is to be hoped, that instead of erecting new ones, many of the old will be converted to other purposes, as fast as possible.

§ 44. Every friend to humanity must cordially concur in the propriety of extending parochial relief to a poor man, while he has still some property remaining; the arguments

* Substance of Speech by Ridgway, p. 81.

† Ditto, p. 87.

for which are too obvious to need repetition here: humanity and policy, though always on the same side of a question, were seldom so obviously so as in the present instance; since depriving a man of the future means of helping himself, when you are bound in such case to provide for him, is wilfully to destroy his happiness, in order to bring expense upon yourself; and by an unheard-of solecism in political iniquity, to commit evil that evil may ensue. But it seems much to be lamented, that Mr. Whitbread stops here; that no new or effectual provisions are to be found in his Bill, whereby the employment of the poor, and their consequent perseverance in habits of industry, may depend on the duty of responsible officers appointed for the purpose, secured by the regular superintendance of persons, possessing that degree of enlightened wisdom, in which the overseers now are, and it is feared, even the new modelled vestries will often be found to be, so miserably deficient. Many cogent objections * to the present overseers might be added to those contained in the 16th section, chap. v. of the "Short Inquiry;" and it is

* These objections are not meant to apply generally to London and the large towns.

apprehended, that the officers and board recommended in the 26th and remaining sections of the same chapter, (secured as the economical discharge of their duty would be, by the rigid inspection of those, from whose pockets the sums are drawn) would produce great benefit, even on the ground of economy; and in every other view of finding proper employment for the poor, and establishing certain means of procuring a connected series of authentic information on this important branch of politics, the advantages flowing from them would be still more momentous.

§ 45. On most political questions, a clear and decided knowledge of the remedy required for an evil is, in this enlightened country, followed at a moderate interval by its application; however it may interfere with the prejudices or exclusive interests of particular parties. But on the two most important subjects of domestic economy, we seem to have established singular exceptions to this remark. The state of the Poor Laws, and the state of the forests, both of which are of vital importance in our peculiar situation, and if well attended to, are capable of rendering us independent of the whole world,

and equal to any possible contingency, are the only institutions and possessions, which have been suffered to moulder, and corrupt, through neglect, and to contract disorders that must, unless remedied, ultimately annihilate the advantages to be expected from them. Were these grand objects properly attended to, and the paltry objections of partial interference, difficulty of execution, and other excuses for idleness, overcome with the manliness, which the magnitude of the evil, and importance of the crisis demand; the present age might proudly reflect upon the sensations of reverence, gratitude, and admiration, with which posterity will look back on the stern and unbending spirit, with which statesmen and heroes as great as the world ever saw, have devoted themselves for their country's good; and a free people has subjected itself to the most enormous sacrifices; that it might, amidst the wreck and ruin of surrounding nations, preserve unsullied to its children that beloved constitution, which makes their country the paradise they find it.

§ 46. The discussion of the several provisions of Mr. Whitbread's Bill being now finished, a very few general observations will

conclude this Supplement. No notice has been taken of the objections sometimes made to all innovations in the Poor Laws, on the ground that they would unsettle the law, and disturb the cases determined upon the subject. If the laws, with the assistance of the cases built upon them, produced the benefits fairly to be expected, there might be reason in the objection. But to unsettle a bad foundation, and thereby disturb a still worse superstructure built upon it, for the sake of erecting a strong and uniform edifice in their room, is the way to secure a comfortable residence to future generations. That Mr. Whitbread's Bill amended, in some instances, and curtailed in others, may be the first stone in the foundation of such an edifice, is the sincere wish of the author of these remarks: but before a suitable superstructure can be raised, he apprehends it will be necessary to qualify considerably some general ideas, which appear in the published reports both of Mr. Whitbread's Speech and Bill; which have been long admitted as data, but which are presumed to be combated in the "Short Inquiry" with some degree of success. Such is first the article in the preamble, which asserts that "the *burden* of the poor's rates has been for many years in a state of progres-

sive increase; and has lately risen to an *enormous* and *alarming* height;" and the insinuation in the 6th page of the Speech, that the *real* amount of the rates has doubled in the last 20 years, and nearly trebled within 30 years. Whereas, if there is as much truth as there appears to be, in the reasoning contained in the 6th chap. of the "Short Inquiry," the sum raised under the rates, bears a smaller proportion to the general profits of the community, than would have been conjectured, upon a fair calculation formed upon the increase of those profits: It is therefore no increasing burden upon *the country in general*, whatever it may be upon those persons *exclusively* bound to bear it. Again, the real value of the sum raised under the rates, instead of being doubled within the last 20 years, hath not increased one third, as appears from the diagram in the 6th section of the above chapter. Till these facts therefore are refuted, it is hoped such general assertions, as those above quoted, founded upon a narrow view of the subject, will not be too implicitly received. Again, in page 3 of the Speech, Mr. Whitbread admits, that the system of our Poor Laws has served to degrade those whom it was meant to exalt; to hold out hopes which cannot be realized, and to

produce a superfluous population, the offspring of improvidence, and the early victim of misery and want. We will not stop to inquire, how far this admission agrees with a subsequent observation (p. 9) of the Speech, that "the situation of the lower classes is better now *in every respect* than at any former time." But unless the arguments, contained in the 2d and 4th chapters of the "Short Inquiry," are mere phantoms of the brain, and the historical deduction in the 3d chapter an absolute fable, the Poor Laws have *not* "degraded those whom they should exalt;" since our peasantry are in a more exalted state than that of any other country; they do *not* "hold out hopes which cannot be realized;" since the happiness of our peasantry, compared with that of other countries, is a *real and substantial* felicity; they do *not* "produce a superfluous population, the early victim of misery and want," since we do not possess more people than we can employ, and the number of our deaths in proportion to our population is smaller, than ever yet existed in a similar state of society. To conclude, these few observations may perhaps serve to convince us, that we are yet very far from understanding even the first principles of that "most difficult of all

political problems; how to reduce the sum of human vice and misery, and how to augment that of human happiness and virtue among the subjects of this realm." All that we know is, that to do this effectually, we must do it without interfering with the general industry and prosperity of the state: and that in the interim, our lowest orders possess a degree of substantial happiness, never before attainable by persons in the same situation of life.

§ 47. The poor must always undergo a certain degree of privation, or they would not be poor. In truth, may we not fairly conclude, from reason and the experience of all past ages, that the all-wise Providence hath made it one of the essential conditions of this sublunary state of things, that the lowest orders of every country should endure a state bordering upon want, in order that a necessity may exist for the exertion of their labour? And is not that necessity a fundamental principle of all civilized society*? If

* The saying of Henry IV. of France, which has always been represented (Mr. Whitbread's Speech, p. 8) as so captivating, "That he wished to see the day, when every peasant in his kingdom should have a pullet in his kettle," was certainly as amiable as any thing evidently founded upon false

this be so, and it be nevertheless admitted, that we have contrived to render the condition of our poor better than at any former period, without interfering with this immutable law of Providence; surely there is reason to suppose, we are in the road to bestow upon them as many temporal advantages, as they are capable of enjoying. If it be true that "vice and misery must of necessity maintain a footing in the world," it must be equally so, that we should exercise our charity in limiting their operation as much as

philosophy could be. But was His Majesty so ignorant of human nature as not to know, that in such a case his fields would have lain waste, his army have been unrecruited, his ships unnavigated, nay even not built, and every subsequent improvement of his country unattempted? That had it been an essential condition of a Frenchman's existence, that he should find his kettle charged with food; instead of the emulation, ingenuity, vivacity and address, which have created happiness to millions, and made that once flourishing land resound with industry, gaiety and pleasure; all would have been silence and apathy and phlegm: the peasant would have reclined upon his hearth, as stupid and immoveable as the sloth upon a tree; like that disgusting animal, roused only by the calls of appetite, and having gorged to excess, he would have relapsed into his former state of torpor †, and

"Lain stretch'd at length and snoring in his den."

† See Mr. Barrow's account of the Dutch peasants at the Cape of Good Hope, *who abound in food*.

possible; and that we may have an opportunity of doing this, was probably another great cause of the existence of such a dispensation. Have we not reason then to exult in the reflection, that our charitable laws and institutions reduce those evils within narrower bounds, than have ever yet confined them?

§ 48. Mr. Malthus by profound skill in reasoning, the admirable arrangement of his materials, and the eloquence of his style, has cast a charm around the opinions entertained by him upon this subject, which the author of these sheets, has in a former work *, with the diffidence becoming in so arduous an undertaking, endeavoured to weaken. He could not avoid thinking the application of those opinions in practice to England, utterly subversive of the prosperity of his country, and the moral and political welfare of its inhabitants: and he felt convinced, that except in a very few circumstances of situation, the opinions are themselves visionary, and contradictory to the usual, and acknowledged laws of Providence, in its government of civil society. Impressed with this conviction,

* The "Short Inquiry" alluded to in the title-page.

the author would have contemned himself, had he been deterred from laying before the public the arguments, which convinced his mind, in the humble endeavour to produce some degree of the same effect on theirs. Sufficient time has not yet elapsed, to ascertain with what general success that endeavour will be attended. Should it be decided by the public to be made upon just grounds, the author will have a strong inducement to proceed in the investigation of a subject, wherein much yet remains concealed, and in which he has always felt a particular interest. On the contrary, should his opinions be fairly proved erroneous, he will have the satisfaction of reflecting, that their publication has been useful to his country, by the light that must necessarily be thrown upon the subject, in the refutation of arguments pronounced by competent judges to have more than a fair *appearance* of solidity.

THE END.

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A

Short Inquiry

INTO THE

POLICY, HUMANITY, AND PAST EFFECTS

OF THE

POOR LAWS;

AND INTO THE

PRINCIPLES UPON WHICH ANY MEASURES FOR THEIR IMPROVEMENT SHOULD BE CONDUCTED;

IN WHICH ARE INCLUDED

A FEW CONSIDERATIONS

ON THE

QUESTIONS OF POLITICAL ŒCONOMY,

Most intimately connected with the Subject;

PARTICULARLY ON THE

POPULATION AND SUPPLY OF FOOD

IN

England.

BY ONE OF HIS MAJESTY'S JUSTICES OF THE PEACE FOR THREE INLAND COUNTIES.

"Æquè et pauperibus prodest, locupletibus æquè."

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